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INSIDE: After several months of route clearance and base security missions, the 950th Engineer Company is back in Wisconsin. Wisconsin National Guard photo



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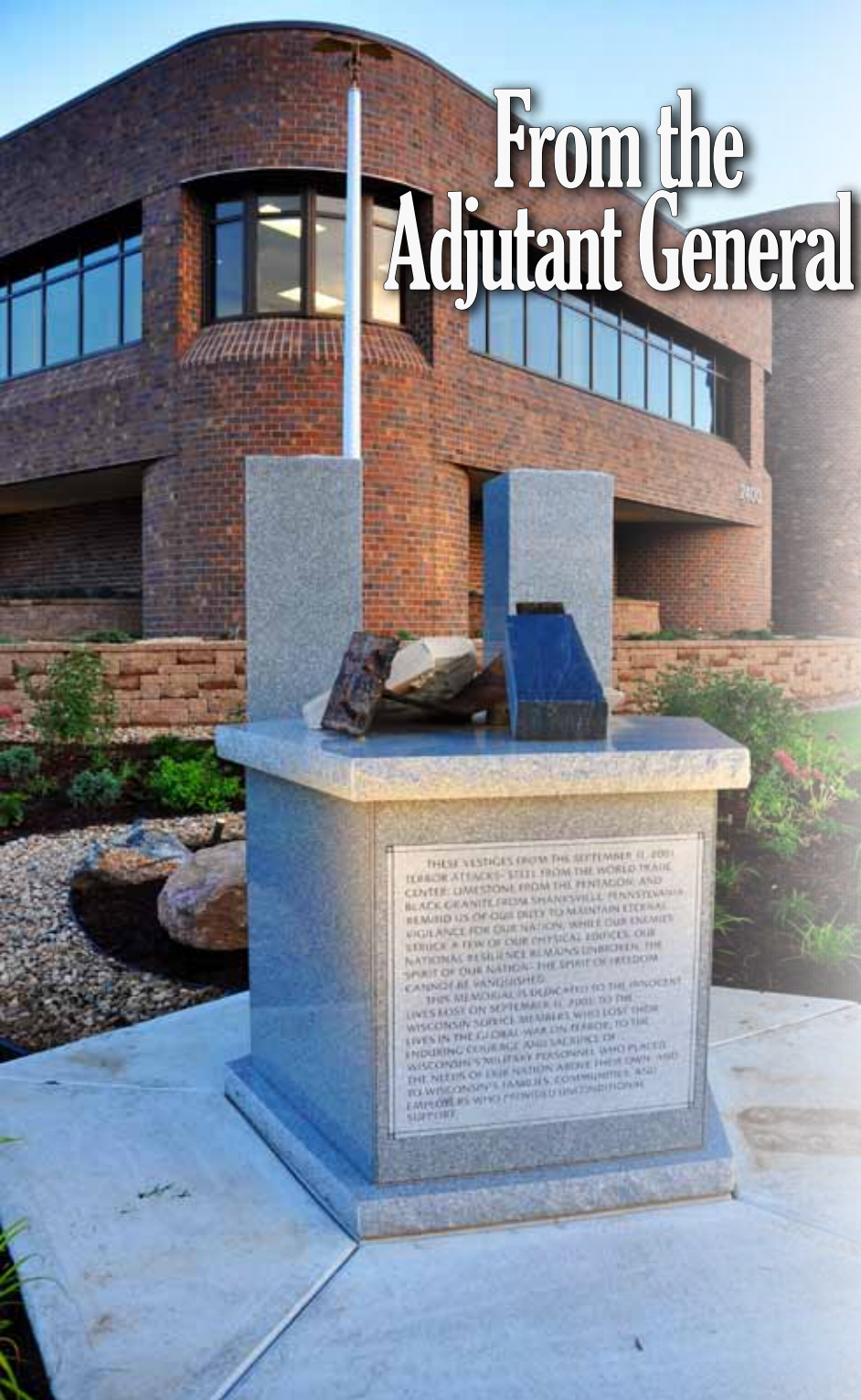
ON THE COVER: A Soldier from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 950th Engineer Company provides security during a route clearance mission in Afghanistan. The 950th deployed to Afghanistan in late 2014, and in addition to route clearance, the unit had taken on a force protection mission as well. The unit has returned safely to Wisconsin. Submitted photo

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From the Adjutant General



We recently dedicated a 9/11 memorial to the men and women of Wisconsin, including the National Guard, who have sacrificed so much for the war on terror that ensued following the attacks on September 11, 2001. The memorial is also dedicated to the families and employers who have supported us throughout the period of unprecedented operations tempo.

Why a memorial? To remember. To remember the nation we were on that beautiful September day when time stood still. To remember our shock and our anger at being so cowardly struck, and the frustration at the loss of so much innocent life. To remember the response from our citizens and first responders whose resiliency was an inspiration for us all. To remember the response of the military, both here and overseas. At home, we quietly and professionally increased our posture. Overseas, we deployed with a mission — to hold accountable those responsible.

The National Guard played a key role at home and abroad. At home, tens of thousands of Guard personnel reported to armories around the nation. There was no call up, no mobilization, and no telephone recall — just patriots putting on a uniform and reporting for duty because our nation was under attack and that is what the National Guard does — we respond. “Always ready and always there” — more than a slogan. A duty to defend this great nation. In short order, the National Guard stood post at our nation’s airports to fill the void between the attack and the birth of the Department of Homeland Security and TSA.

As the President turned his focus on the responsible party and declared war on

terror, the National Guard was mobilized. Thus began the largest period of sustained operations in the National Guard’s history with hundreds of thousands of National Guard soldiers and airmen having deployed since 9/11. The response was exceptional and the National Guard met or exceeded every expectation. We fulfilled the vision of and validated the intent of the Abrams doctrine, which created the all-volunteer force. A foundational tenet of this doctrine was that — if America had to fight to defend her national interests, we needed to mobilize the National Guard. By mobilizing the National Guard, GEN Abrams and Secretary Melvin Laird knew that America’s support would follow.

Here in Wisconsin, the National Guard sent every unit into the fight. The vast majority of our personnel deployed multiple times. We lost 10 of our own — a pain that endures. Countless others silently bear the scars — seen and unseen — of service in these conflicts. Wisconsin continued the tradition begun in the civil war and in every conflict since, we are ready and prepared to defend our communities, state and nation.

9/11 was a tough day, but we are measured by how we respond to tough days. America is a resilient nation and we remain united and resolute on the values which endure — freedom, liberty, and the rule of law. We will always remember those who served and those who supported us. This memorial will stand in silent tribute for generations to come. Forward!

Donald P. Dunbar

'It's great to be home': 950th Engineer Company returns from Afghanistan

Capt. Joe Trovato

Wisconsin National Guard

The 950th Engineer Company's arrival at rain-soaked Fort Bliss, Texas was the second-last stop in completing a mission that began last October.

"It's great to be home," said Staff Sgt. Douglas Krultz, a Greenwood, Wisconsin, resident. "And in a few days, we'll be home with our families and friends and doing stuff we really love."

A route clearance company by trade and trained to identify and eliminate improvised explosive devices, the 950th conducted route clearance operations on its last deployment to Iraq in 2010 and had continued training for that mission since returning. Even after leaving Wisconsin last fall to conduct pre-mobilization training at Fort Bliss, the unit continued to prepare for its assigned mission.

But when the 950th arrived in Afghanistan, plans changed, and approximately half of the unit was reassigned to force protection operations at two different sites. One platoon continued with its assigned route clearance mission.

That adaptability and dependability was celebrated in Superior, Wisconsin Sept. 4.

"No sooner did you get into Afghanistan and that mission shifted or expanded," Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, the assistant adjutant general for Army, said of the changes while speaking to the Soldiers and their families. "And in true Wisconsin fashion, you embraced it with your Midwestern ethics and just the professionalism that you have as a Wisconsin Soldier and as an engineer Soldier and accomplished that mission."

Capt. Andrew Redd, the commander of the 950th, described a challenging but successful mission in Afghanistan. Conducting force protection and route clearance missions, were vital tasks in the overall war effort, he said.

"Providing security for these individuals so they can continue the mission and wrap up the war in Afghanistan is a vital task," Redd said. "And we were the only ones there to do it in our roles. And providing security can never lapse. You can never sleep, you can't rest. We had no easy days in Afghanistan, and you should be proud of all your Soldiers and everything they did."

"Every day was a challenge for us" he said. "We faced unique challenges, and we left Afghanistan with better solutions to their challenges and setup follow-on units for success. You should be proud of your Soldiers, and I'm proud to have served with them and been their commander."

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A Soldier from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 950th Engineer Company embraces his wife and child shortly after arriving at Superior Middle School in Superior, Wis., Sept. 4.

Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Oscar Gollaz

950th completes Afghanistan deployment

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Sen. Tammy Baldwin lauded the 950th for its ability to adjust to the change in mission.

"We are so proud of you," she said. "And as was already mentioned, you trained for a mission, and then with great resiliency and determination, had additional missions assigned in Afghanistan. You rose to the occasion at every turn. We are so proud, and your safe return has answered our prayers."

Rep. Sean Duffy, of Wisconsin's 7th Congressional District, agreed.

"Your country is so proud of you" he said. "The great state of Wisconsin loves you. I look at all of you. It is the smartest, the hardest working, the best-looking group of people in America. No wonder you are loved not just here but all over the world. Welcome home. God love you. Thank you for your service."

While serving in Afghanistan, the unit completed 110 route clearance missions and provided 24-hour security for two separate facilities. It also helped confirm and destroy one of the largest weapons caches ever discovered in Afghanistan's Parwan Province.

While the unit accomplished great things overseas, each Soldier's family and employer played an equally important role in the overall success of the unit's deployment, the state's military leadership said.

"Families, you have the toughest part of this whole deployment," said Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields, the senior enlisted advisor for the Wisconsin Army National Guard. "It is a tremendous

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Above, route clearance vehicles from the 950th Engineer Company conduct their mission in Afghanistan.

At left, a Soldier from the 950th Engineer Company outside his Buffalo mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle during a route clearance patrol in Afghanistan. Submitted photos



[Click here to read a story about the 950th Engineer Company's deployment to Afghanistan](#)

950th returns from Afghanistan

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stress and responsibility on you, and I want to personally thank you for that sacrifice and the dedication you make, because without you, our Soldiers would not be successful. You contribute tremendously to the success of this mission.”

Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin’s adjutant general, praised the unit and its accomplishments while also thanking the families for their sacrifices. He also thanked veterans among those in the audience and noted that the returning 950th Soldiers join a select group of Americans who can call themselves combat veterans.

“There is nothing sweeter than returning to the U.S. and your families after having served your country honorably,” Dunbar said. “Very few Americans can say they served their country in uniform, and even fewer can say they served their country in a combat zone. I’m extremely proud and thankful for your service. Welcome home.”



Above, Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields greets a Soldier from the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 950th Engineer Company after the unit returned to the United States Aug. 24, at Fort Bliss, Texas, following a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan. The nearly 100-Soldier unit headquartered in Superior, Wis., left Wisconsin in October 2014 and conducted route clearance and force protection missions overseas. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato



At left, a Soldier from the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 950th Engineer Company embraces his wife and child shortly after arriving at Superior Middle School in Superior, Wis., Sept. 4.

Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Oscar Gollaz

[Click here to see additional photos about the 950th Engineer Company](#)

Wisconsin Airmen building relationships in Scotland

Airman 1st Class Morgan R. Lipinski
128th Refueling Wing

KINLOSS BARRACKS, Scotland — The smell of pine needles and the North Sea was heavy in the air. Sea birds swooped in circles above while the sun shined down on the grassy field. Metal shovels crunching through wet dirt and the hum of idled machinery echoed throughout the opening. Wiping sweaty brows and sighing with exhaustion, Wisconsin Air National Guard Airmen with the 128th Air Refueling Wing's Civil Engineering Squadron carried on with their work — part of Exercise Flying Rose June 2015 at Kinloss Barracks in Morayshire, Scotland, United Kingdom.

Exercise Flying Rose is an exchange exercise between the U.S. Air National Guard and British Army, said Lt. Col. Heath Duncan, 128th Air Refueling Wing Civil Engineering Squadron commander for the exercise. During Exercise Flying Rose, forces deploy to one another's countries and work to complete construction-related jobs.

For the 2015 exercise, 128th Air Refueling Wing Civil Engineering Airmen deployed to Kinloss Barracks while British Army troops deployed to Savannah, Georgia.

The British Army Royal Engineers from the 60 Headquarters and Support Squadron at Kinloss Barracks hosted the Airmen for the two-week duration of the exercise. The Royal Engineers ensured that the Airmen had adequate accommodations, food, work supplies and other necessities.

While at Kinloss Barracks, the Airmen took on several construction initiatives. One task was to construct three concrete pads at the Kinloss Barracks Single Living Accommodation. The pads consisted of a concrete slab enclosed by a timber fence. The completed cement pads are now used as a containing area for the Kinloss Barracks Single Living Accommodation's waste receptacles.

Another Exercise Flying Rose task the Airmen completed was constructing two troop shelters. The shelters consisted of a gravel base, wood structure and a tin roof. The troop shelters are set to be used as a resting area for British troops during Kinloss Barracks' air support training.

The Airmen used British Army construction equipment for jobs such as moving dirt and mixing cement, said Senior Airman Connor Larkin, a 128th Air Refueling Wing Civil Engineering Squadron power production specialist. Prior to construction, the Airmen were trained by the Royal Engineers on operations and safety procedures to ensure a successful mission.

However, working with foreign methods of construction did have its challenges.

"We have learned how to work with the constraints of the foreign nationals' system and using different tools with different power and different materials," Duncan said. "We've been able to overcome challenges with the help of our hosts."

The Royal Engineers of Kinloss Barracks also benefited from the exercise.

"The Americans learned our way of getting the job done, and we are also taking away quite a bit of skills from them, too," said Sergeant James Higgins, a Royal Engineer at Kinloss Barracks.

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Senior Airman Connor Larkin, a power production specialist with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, shovels sand into a cement mixer June 12 at Kinloss Barracks in Morayshire, Scotland, United Kingdom, in support of Exercise Flying Rose. The cement was being used to fill the concrete pads at the Kinloss Barracks Single Living Accommodation. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Airman 1st Class Morgan R. Lipinski





Left, 128th Air Refueling Wing civil engineers move training equipment June 9 at Kinloss Barracks. Far left, Senior Master Sgt. Cheryl Morris uses a tape measure to determine the distance between foundation posts June 10 at Kinloss Barracks in Morayshire, Scotland, United Kingdom, in support of Exercise Flying Rose. 128th Air Refueling Wing photos by Airman 1st Class Morgan R. Lipinski

128th ARW engineers set foundation for friendship

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Another aspect of Exercise Flying Rose is learning the culture of overseas allies. During their time at Kinloss Barracks, the Airmen learned about the history, heritage and customs of the British Military.

"We worked on construction skills, but we also got a broad range of cultural experiences," Larkin said.

While the Airmen were at Kinloss Barracks, the Royal Engineers hosted a formal dinner in honor of Exercise Flying Rose and its participants. The dinner displayed several ceremonies and customs, allowing the Airmen to witness the extensive heritage of the British Military.

"The military is based on tradition and seeing another country's military traditions is a very unique opportunity," Larkin said.

Because the Royal Engineers derive from many different countries within the United Kingdom, such as Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales, the Airmen were able to experience an array of cultures and people, Duncan explained.

The Airmen were also able to venture


outside of Kinloss Barracks and dive deep into the history of Scotland and the United Kingdom through cultural visits to nearby destinations.

"Seeing the history of this country really has helped me understand the British more and really appreciate their culture," Larkin said.

Along with building structures, the Airmen and Royal Engineers also built up camaraderie between the forces.

"We got to personally interact with the Royal Engineers — not only on a work level, but also a social level," Duncan said. "That's a tremendous experience that is hard to replicate."

The camaraderie will especially be put to good use when working together overseas, Larkin said. Because the Airmen are now familiar with the British military way of life, there will be a smooth transition when working together in a deployed environment due to the bonds and understanding built during Exercise Flying Rose.

"It's been a privilege working with the Americans and I hope to work with them again soon," Higgins said. 



An F-16 from the Arizona Air National Guard's 162nd Fighter Wing takes off during Northern Lightning at Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center, Wisconsin. Air units from around the country converged on Volk Field for the two-week combat training exercise June 8-19.
Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Oscar Gollaz

Northern Lightning tests air crews in realistic combat scenario

Capt. Joe Trovato

Wisconsin National Guard

VOLK FIELD, Wisconsin — Air crews from around the country descended on Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center for a two-week combat training exercise June 8-19.

Air National Guard units from Madison, Wisconsin and Milwaukee joined others from Tulsa, Oklahoma, Duluth, Minnesota, Tucson, Arizona, and Mountain Home Air Force Base, Ohio, as well as an active duty Air Force unit from Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, for Northern Lightning — an annual exercise that prepares air crews for combat against a near-peer adversary.

The 2015 edition of Northern Lightning featured a first for an Air National Guard exercise as it incorporated privately contracted aircraft to simulate adversaries in the skies over Wisconsin.

More than 700 Airmen converged on Volk Field for the exercise, and with hundreds more involved remotely at sites around the country, Northern Lightning is a world-class air combat training exercise.

The exercise simulates a deployed

environment and tests the ability of air crews to launch into an enemy airspace, refuel in mid-air, navigate through surface-to-air threats, neutralize enemy aircraft, conduct bombing missions and then fight back through those threats and obstacles before returning to base. The drama is currently unfolding in the Volk Field Special Activity Airspace that stretches across the skies of central Wisconsin.

But this year, instead of using Air Force F-16s and personnel to simulate the enemy, the National Guard contracted with Draken International, a privately owned company that owns tactical aircraft, to put A-4 Skyhawks into the airspace. The A-4 remains in service with some international air forces and was used extensively by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War.

The realistic scenario is enough to prepare pilots that could deploy to combat within as little as one week.

"This is about as realistic as you can get," said. Col. Dave Romuald, the commander of Volk Field CRTC.

The training prepares these units for combat against near-peer adversaries with relatively advanced air forces in

potential hotspots around the world. And with surface-to-air threat emitters spread throughout the airspace to simulate surface-to-air missiles and A-4s, Northern Lightning offers a training opportunity that cannot be replicated at home for the visiting units.

"They could leave tomorrow and be ready to go," said Col. Matt Manifold, the commander of the International Guard Air Force Reserve Test Center in Tucson. Manifold participated in the exercise along with fellow Airmen from the 162nd Fighter Wing.

Utilizing the privately owned A-4s provides a significant cost-savings for the National Guard, which would otherwise be forced to employ its own pilots and F-16s to simulate enemy aircraft. Besides the monetary value, the contracted A-4s allow the F-16 pilots to focus on their own training and skills, rather than cannibalizing their own training time learning how to play the role of an adversary.

Plus it provides a more realistic environment than seeing familiar aircraft in the sky.

"Fighter pilots always like to see a different type of airplane in the air, so

if I'm an F-16 pilot, and I come to the merge, and I see a dark A-4, it really gets the scenario going in my blood, because now it feels like I'm fighting the enemy," Romuald said.

Lt. Col. Christopher Hansen, Volk Field's director of operations, said the training opportunity provided by Volk Field is unmatched, and he stressed his appreciation to the local community for its support and understanding during the exercise as increased noise and military activity filled the skies.

"Because what we have here is what I would consider a national treasure," he said of Volk Field. "To be able to get this training for all of these air crews is something that is extremely unique to west-central Wisconsin."

Milwaukee's 128th Air Refueling Wing, Madison's 115th Fighter Wing, the 148th Fighter Wing from Duluth, the 138th Fighter Wing from Tulsa, the 162nd Fighter Wing from Tucson, the 266th Range Squadron from Mountain Home Air Force Base, and the 38th Reconnaissance Squadron from Offutt Air Force Base all played a part in Northern Lightning. 📸

Wisconsin, Minnesota Guard team up for emergency response exercise

Staff Sgt. Alexandria Hughes
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP RIPLEY, Minn. — The Wisconsin National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High Yield Explosives (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) participated in a dynamic emergency response training exercise in partnership with the Minnesota National Guard Aug. 23 to 27.

The Vigilant Guard Joint Regional Exercise Program is a National Guard Bureau and U.S. Northern Command initiative intended to strengthen cooperation between federal, state, local, civilian and military partners to improve readiness for emergency coordination, response, and recovery.

Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment (HHD) and the 457th Chemical Company, and the 273rd Engineer Company — both elements of the 641st Troop Command Battalion, 64th Troop Command — make up the Wisconsin Army National Guard component of the CERFP. Airmen of the 115th Fighter Wing complete the CERFP with medical and communications support from the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

Vigilant Guard provided an opportunity for the Wisconsin CERFP to train for CBRNE events, natural disaster response, and mass casualty incident management with hands-on, real-world scenarios alongside the Minnesota National Guard and civilian emergency response institutions, like the St. Paul Fire Department's Minnesota Task Force One.

Lt. Col. Scott Southworth, commander of the 641st Troop Command Battalion, acted as CERFP commander during Vigilant Guard. He emphasized how pivotal a role the collaborative nature of the training event plays in the readiness of

the Wisconsin CERFP.

"Training in a multistate, multi-institutional scenario is essential because that's the likely scenario where the CERFP will operate," Southworth said.

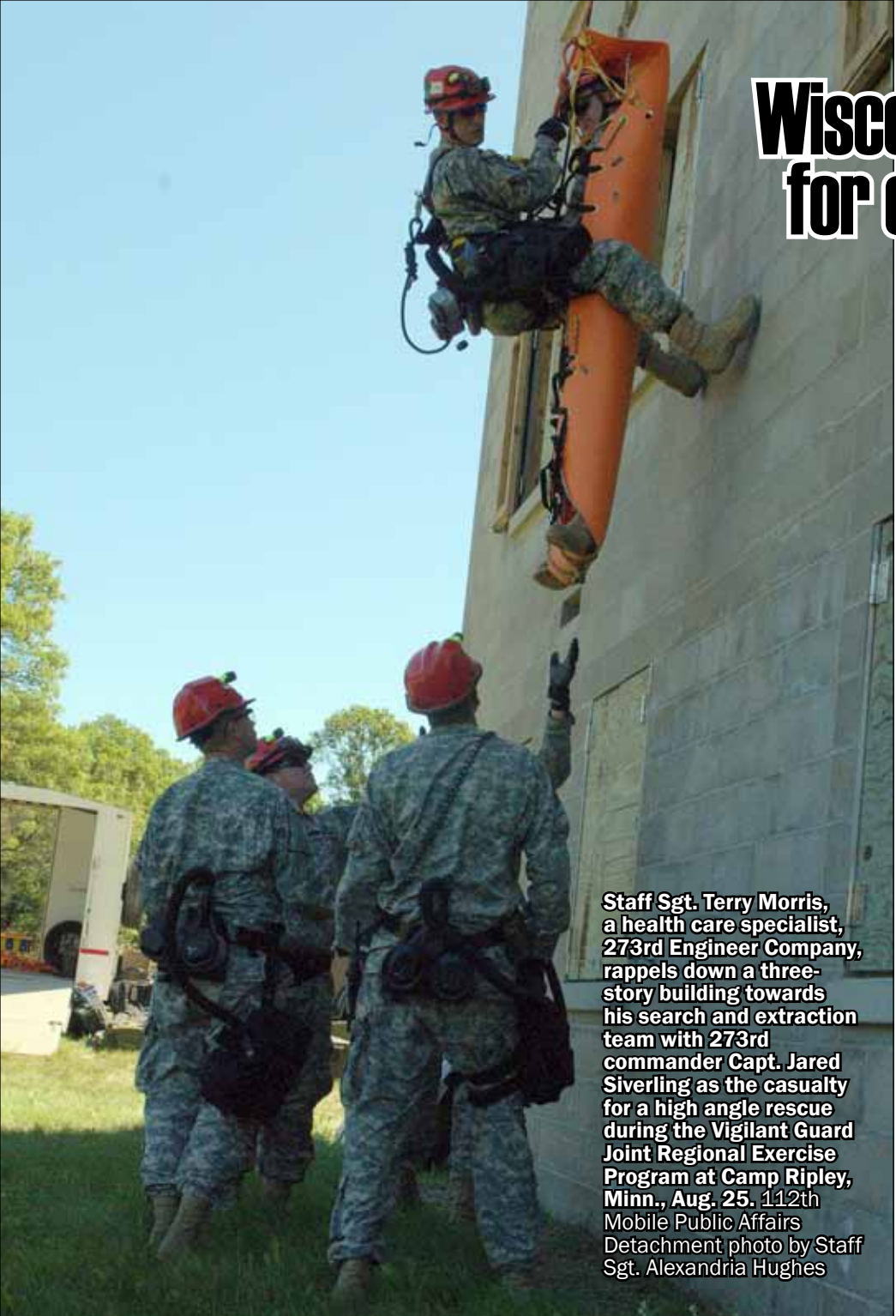
"If and when the CERFP is called to duty, I expect that it would be a significant disaster that would require more than one CERFP, possibly the homeland response force, and definitely different agencies ... and that requires a training program that involves multistate, multi-jurisdictional, higher level players," Southworth continued. "Vigilant Guard offers us the ability to connect not only with institutions like the St. Paul Fire Department, but really work hand in hand with Minnesota CERFP."

Master Sgt. Brent Voelker, operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge (NCOIC) with HHD, who acted as battle captain during Vigilant Guard, also spoke on the importance of the training for Wisconsin CERFP capabilities.

"The biggest thing is, as we say in the military side of the house, 'train as you fight,'" Voelker said. "If we don't have those outside agencies, we don't understand the complexities they come with, or how we do things dealing with them and them dealing with us. I believe every quarter, somewhere in the nation, we do a Vigilant Guard. That's basically to ensure that we maintain those lines of communication as policy and procedure change due to things that happen throughout the world."

"This year we actually have a unique opportunity where we get to work hand-in-hand with Minnesota's CERFP," Voelker explained. "We can share our experiences and best practices between the two units and hopefully come out of this a better CERFP element."

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Staff Sgt. Terry Morris, a health care specialist, 273rd Engineer Company, rappels down a three-story building towards his search and extraction team with 273rd commander Capt. Jared Siverling as the casualty for a high angle rescue during the Vigilant Guard Joint Regional Exercise Program at Camp Ripley, Minn., Aug. 25. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Staff Sgt. Alexandria Hughes

CERFP joins Minnesota counterpart for exercise

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Southworth stressed that not only working with outside agencies, like in Vigilant Guard, but the infrastructure of the Wisconsin CERFP help to make it a stronger, readier, more capable force.

"I also want to stress — this is important to me — that beyond the training we get with other states or other emergency responders on the civilian side, the best part about the CERFP is the interoperability of Air Force and Army personnel working seamlessly together, bringing all of those military skills and those civilian talents into the CERFP enterprise," he said. "That's what makes us strong."

457th platoon sergeant Sgt. 1st Class James Austin, NCOIC of the ambulatory decontamination lane during Vigilant Guard, put the skills of the Wisconsin CERFP, and its value to Wisconsin communities, into perspective.

"It's one team," Austin said. "One can't work without the other. When you have a natural disaster, the last thing you want to happen is the same thing that happened at Hurricane Katrina. The late response, the uproar of the community going against the powers that be, and the powers that be trying to figure out, 'Okay, what do we do to get this straight?' But now we finally have something that's right on time. It's a seamless step to get them closer to safety, and recovery, and get people their lives back."

Sgt. Jennifer Lazarski, a human resources NCO with HHD, and administration NCO during Vigilant Guard, captured what the CERFP means to her, as a Soldier who is a part of it.

"I think of it as something akin to Sept. 11," Lazarski said. "When I look back, I wish I would have been able to help. I feel the same way about Hurricane Katrina. Those terrible disasters are why I joined and why I'm so glad to be part of a unit that can respond to those types of



Sgt. Gregory Mayeshiba, an assistant squad leader, and Sgt. Kayleen Reetz, a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) specialist, both with the 457th Chemical Company, prepare to transport a casualty to medical with the help of their fellow Soldiers after completing non-ambulatory decontamination during the Vigilant Guard Joint Regional Exercise Program at Camp Ripley, Minn., Aug. 25, 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Staff Sgt. Alexander Henninger

events. The events that people remember for the rest of their lives."

Lazarski's sentiment echoed throughout the unit.

"The most rewarding part I would say is knowing that what you're training on is something that is not only going to help somebody else, but it's going to help your family as well," Austin said. "You know that when you're called up you're going to be helping American citizens. You want to be ready to help your fellow neighbor when disaster happens. That's what these Soldiers look forward to, getting ready to go out there when something happens and help their fellow Americans."

Spc. Benjamin Zier, a CBRN specialist with the 457th, agreed.

"We're getting the job done," he said. "At the end of the day, when it's all said

and done, you know that your job is to save people's lives."

"This is the reason I joined," Lazarski said. "We want to help the United States and the CERFP is one of the best groups to be a part of. You feel like you're helping the whole world. I know I can help when something bad happens, so we can be a part of history — to help when it really matters — and make a real difference."

Southworth summed up what the Wisconsin CERFP — as a ready, willing, and dynamic force — means for the people of Wisconsin, and to the National Guardsmen who trained to serve in an emergency during Vigilant Guard.

"The people of Wisconsin depend on us to respond to federal missions — war," Southworth said. "But they also depend on us to be there when they're suffering.

Whether it's a major natural disaster or a terrorist attack, what we do here in the CERFP in a training environment like Vigilant Guard is preparing us for Wisconsin's worst day. Because on Wisconsin's worst day, that has to be the CERFP's best day.

"If we do that right, we're going to save people's lives, we're going to provide reassurance that things are under control, and we're going to be supporting our friends, our neighbors, and our own families," he continued. "In the CERFP enterprise, we are taking care of each other and taking care of our communities. And that is nothing short of a privilege that every member of this element takes very seriously." 📷

Staff Sgt. Alexander Henninger contributed to this report.



This is only a drill

32nd Brigade Soldiers prepare to interact with troops role-playing agitated civilians displaced by an F5 tornado during National Guard Reaction Force training at the Waukesha Expo Center on Aug. 29.
Wisconsin National Guard photo by
Capt. Brian Faltinson

Capt. Brian Faltinson
Wisconsin National Guard

Local residents on a drizzly Saturday noticed their streets filled with police cars, ambulances and Wisconsin National Guard Humvees as nearly 1,000 emergency and military first responders converged on Waukesha, Wisconsin, in a training scenario where the city was devastated by an EF5 tornado.

Nearly 700 Wisconsin National Guard troops partnered with the city of Waukesha Police

Department, civilian emergency responders and all levels of emergency management to conduct a full-scale disaster exercise held Aug. 28-30 at the Waukesha County Expo Center and at sites throughout the city.

"The tornado scenario simulated a mass casualty event that would prompt emergency response from all levels of emergency management including the

National Guard," Kevin Lahner, Waukesha city administrator, said.

Such large-scale exercises are vital to hone the ability of local and state agencies to respond and work together during both natural and manmade disasters in Wisconsin.

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Disaster response exercise prepares Guard emergency reaction force

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“This exercise here validates all of our planning and preparation,” said Brian Satula, Wisconsin Emergency Management administrator. “Barring having a real incident, this exercise is the best thing we have to make sure all of the preparedness, planning and coordination for responding to emergencies works.”

The Waukesha Police Department volunteered to host the exercise, which is required to validate the National Guard Reaction Force’s (NGRF) ability to conduct its civil support mission.

“Planning started back in August of 2014,” said Waukesha police Capt. Dan Baumann, assistant exercise director. “We sat down and we wanted to do verification of our own abilities and assist the Guard in providing for their own validation and that grew into the event we have today.”

The NGRF is a rapidly deployable, all-hazards temporary task force which supports local authorities by providing site security, conducting presence patrols, establishing roadblocks and checkpoints, controlling civil disturbances, protecting selected assets, and providing force protection and security for the 54th Civil Support Team or the Wisconsin National Guard’s CBRNE (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Explosive) Enhanced Response Force Package.

Wisconsin Army National Guard units rotate through this important mission regularly and the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) is slated to take over the duty from the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade Oct 1.

“If we get mobilized in the next year or two, this is the type of mission we are going to have,” Col. Mike Rand, 32nd IBCT commander stated in a mission briefing to his assembled Soldiers, “It is absolutely critical to take home the skills you learn while here.”

“Once we are validated, we are on the clock for the foreseeable future,” added



As part of a training exercise, Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers and Waukesha law enforcement work together in the command cell during a simulated gas explosion scenario on Aug. 29 in Waukesha, Wis. The National Guard Reaction Force is designed to respond to an incident ahead of federal assets to assist local authorities, and is capable of quickly delivering an initial force of more than 100 personnel and follow-on force of several hundred within 24 hours. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Capt. Brian Faltinson [Move your cursor over this photo to see another image](#)

Command Sgt. Maj. Curt Patrouille of the 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry Regiment. “Any manmade or natural disaster, the state of Wisconsin is going to be calling on us.”

The NGRF is designed to respond to an incident ahead of federal assets and is capable of quickly delivering an initial force of more than 100 personnel and a follow-on force of several hundred within 24 hours.

Wisconsin adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, emphasized the importance of the NGRF mission when speaking to the 32nd IBCT’s Soldiers.

“Our mission is to be the first military

responder in the homeland,” Dunbar said. “If police, fire and other civilian first responders get overwhelmed or need some support, they are going to reach out to the National Guard. If the governor approves this request, I am going to rely on the NGRF as our ‘go-to’ capability for these types of missions.”

The 32nd IBCT completed several essential tasks during the exercise in order to validate for the NGRF mission according to Maj. Michael Hanson, commander of 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry Regiment. Each unit within 24 hours had to gather all of its personnel at its home armory, prepare all of its

equipment and travel across the state to the response site ready to contribute to local authorities. Units then performed a specific list of tasks that supported those authorities. The mission was not complete until all units redeployed safely to their home armories.

While in Waukesha, Soldiers provided site security for civilian agencies, performed vehicle recovery operations, responded to a civil disturbance, as well as communicated effectively with local authorities.

“Soldiers benefit from realistic training and ensuring that communications [functions] between themselves and higher headquarters, as well as working with civilian agencies — Waukesha police, county sheriff’s department, medical examiner’s office — and helping to grow those relationships,” said 1st Lt. William Prindle of Troop A, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry.

“Our unit has assisted the state during flooding in 2008 and during several snowstorms,” 1st Sgt. Walter Smithson of Troop B, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry, said, “but over half our unit has never performed such a mission and this exercise allowed them and the whole unit to gain confidence in their skills and abilities and also learn to work with civilian agencies.”

Wisconsin Army National Guard units located in Appleton, Camp Douglas, Eau Claire, Fond du Lac, Fort Atkinson, Madison, Marinette, Menomonie, River Falls and Watertown participated in the exercise.

“We want this training to be very relevant and realistic,” said Col. Leah Moore, chief of the Wisconsin National Guard Joint Staff, which is the lead planning element for the Guard’s emergency response. “It is important to us and we must get this right when called upon, and so we are prepared to respond with no notice and to do that we need to test and challenge ourselves with relevant, realistic training.” 📷

Return of the BIG GUNS



Vaughn R. Larson
@ease staff

FORT MCCOY, Wis. — Once upon a time, more than 1,500 Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers manned 54 155-mm self-propelled howitzers in three field artillery battalions — the 120th, 121st and 126th.

By 2006, the 120th had converted to the smaller M119 105-mm howitzer, the 121st had converted to the Multiple Launch Rocket System and would shortly transition to the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), and the 126th turned in its field artillery mission to become the 257th Brigade Support Battalion. Outside of the 426th Regional Training Institute, Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers had not fired the large cannon in nearly a decade.

That officially changed June 26, as the 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery Regiment completed two weeks of training by firing the first live rounds from its new M777 155-mm howitzers.

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Members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery fired their first rounds from their newly fielded M777 155-mm howitzers June 25 at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. The live-fire exercise culminated the battalion's transition from the M119 105-mm howitzer, a smaller cannon. @ease photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Big guns return to Wisconsin Army Guard

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“As a career Wisconsin Army National Guard field artilleryman, this day is significant,” said Lt. Col. Jeffrey Kurka, commander of the 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery, “as Fort McCoy once again rings out with the roar of Wisconsin Army National Guard big guns.”



Lt. Col. Kurka

The M777 howitzers are different from the earlier 155-mm cannons in several ways. The M109 howitzers were self-propelled and were often mistaken for tanks, as the large cannon protruded from a sloping turret carried by a Bradley chassis. The M777, a towed cannon, looks much more traditional, but it is hardly old-fashioned.

The M777 uses satellites to properly place and aim in the field in under three minutes, a task that used to take a dozen minutes using traditional methods. Secure radios allow artillerymen to receive missions from a fire direction center that could be up to 10 kilometer away. And because the new howitzers are not required to be within shouting distance of the fire direction center, gun crews are not restricted to a firing line — they can disperse across a larger area, presenting a smaller target for the enemy.

In addition to a direct support mission, the larger cannon diversifies the 120th's mission capability to include engaging deep targets between 14 and 22 miles away, and firing improved munitions to destroy the enemy's lines of advance.

“The biggest difference is a bigger crew — definitely a bigger piece,” said Staff Sgt. Michael Sentkowski, a howitzer



At left, a cannoneer swabs the breech of an M777 155-mm howitzer during a live-fire exercise June 25 at Fort McCoy, Wis. At right, a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st

section chief with the 120th. “I think it requires a little more teamwork.”

The M777 calls for a nine-person crew — six for the cannon and three on the ammunition team. The self-propelled 155-mm howitzers came with a hydraulic rammer, but the M777 requires the muscle of two Soldiers and a type of battlefield choreography to finesse a large, curved ramrod.

Pfc. Terry Tackes said the moving

pieces of the M777 made it a little different from the M119, which was also a towed cannon. He said the best part of the new, larger cannon was “just working with these guys. The teamwork is outstanding.”

The battalion also added a third firing battery, reactivating Battery C, which will be located in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. Capt. Jason Doro and 1st Sgt. Jaime Preder will lead the new unit.

“This is the first growth in artillery in



Battalion, 120th Field Artillery waits for his section chief to verify the shell-fuse combination. @ease photos by Vaughn R. Larson [Click here to see additional photos](#)

the state since the 1970s,” Kurka said, noting that Soldiers in maintenance, operations and fire direction control trained over the past few weeks to reestablish the 155-mm howitzer's place in the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

“I commend you for your effort,” he continued. “It is with you that the enduring legacy of the Wisconsin artilleryman now rests. It could not be in better hands.” 📷



Red Arrow Soldiers complete a 12-mile ruck march during testing for the Expert Infantryman Badge at Fort McCoy, Wis., June 18. More than 190 32nd Infantry

Brigade Combat Team Soldiers competed for the EIB, and 24 earned it after a grueling multi-day event. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Oscar Gollaz

Red Arrow Soldiers earn coveted Expert Infantryman Badge

Capt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

FORT MCCOY, Wis. — Twenty-four Red Arrow Soldiers earned the right to call themselves “Expert Infantrymen” after concluding a grueling multi-day assessment of their infantry skills at Fort McCoy in June.

The 24 Soldiers earned the coveted Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB) during the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team’s annual training.

Training for the competition began June 7 with more than 190 candidates after the 32nd reported for annual training, and testing concluded June 18. The Soldiers received six days of training on the various tasks required to earn the EIB and then moved into five consecutive days of testing. To earn the EIB, Soldiers must successfully complete 41 specific tasks. Failing more than two disqualifies a candidate. One Soldier was “true blue,” meaning, he completed every task without a single “no-go” in any event.

Soldiers in any military occupational specialty (MOS) can compete, but only those holding infantry or cavalry MOSs are eligible to wear the badge. For an officer to wear the badge, infantry must be their primary branch. Soldiers also must pre-qualify as “expert” on their rifles before joining the competition.

The testing begins with the Army Physical Fitness Test, in which candidates must score a minimum of 75 points on a

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24 EIBs for 32nd IBCT

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100-point scale in each category — push-ups, sit-ups and two-mile run. Soldiers usually have to score a minimum of 60 points in each category to pass during regular testing.

Day and night land navigation, medical scenarios, combat lanes, assembly and disassembly of weapons systems and a 12-mile road march are all included in the 41 tasks. The Soldiers are put through various lanes where they must react to different scenarios. The 41 tasks are embedded in those lanes, and the competitors don't know when or in what order they will be tested. The 12-mile road march is the final event, and candidates must walk 12 miles in three hours while carrying a full pack. Upon completion, they must clear their weapon, disassemble it within two minutes, then reassemble it and conduct a functions check in two minutes.

"So when you're physically exhausted, you have to be very mentally sharp," said Capt. Nickolas Litchfield, of the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry and a member of the board that organized this year's testing.

Litchfield said the last time any Wisconsin Guardsmen tested for the EIB was in 2003 when Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry competed. The brigade had not offered the testing brigade-wide since the 1990s.

"The Expert Infantry Badge signifies that I, as a Soldier, know everything I can possibly know in my craft and can do it under pressure and in arduous conditions and still come through and do everything that is needed to complete a mission," Litchfield said.

He said that only about 8 percent of candidates ultimately earn the badge Army-wide, but the knowledge, skills and training that results only benefits the larger force.

"Because they know how to receive training, and then they pass that on and



A Red Arrow Soldier throws a hand grenade during Expert Infantryman Badge testing at Fort McCoy, Wis., June 18. More than 190 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Soldiers

competed for the EIB, and 24 earned it after a grueling multi-day event. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Oscar Gollaz [Move your cursor over this photo to see another image](#)

give training," he said. "EIB holders in any unit become the core group that know what to do and when to do it and how to do it and keep on with the ingenuity that infantrymen always possess."

EIB testing began in 1944 at the direction of the Army's chief of staff, and the test is standardized across the Army. For that reason, the 32nd partnered with the 101st Airborne's Third Brigade Combat Team to validate graders, tasks, conditions and standards for the testing. Litchfield said the support from the active component was vital in making the EIB testing a success for the 32nd.

Because of how long it has been since the Red Arrow conducted EIB testing, the unit did not have enough EIB holders to run it organically. All graders must be EIB holders themselves, and with the operations tempo and deployments of

the past decade, the 32nd has not had an opportunity to do the testing and build a roster of EIB holders. With 24 newly minted members of that fraternity, the brigade hopes to be able to continue growing its numbers and eventually run its own testing.

Litchfield believes that EIB testing fits with the brigade's goal of getting back to the individual fundamentals and basics of being an infantryman. Maj. Andrew Johansen, with the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry and president of the 32nd's EIB board, agreed and hopes that the brigade can continue to conduct testing at regular intervals.

"Because they go through so many tasks and their individual Soldier skills, regardless if they earn the badge or not, they've gone through the train-up, so they are very proficient in the 41 tasks that

they're trained on," he said. "So they can take that training back to the unit and take it forward and help all the Soldiers in the unit become more proficient infantrymen."

Sgt. Scott Behnke, a team leader with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, earned his EIB during this year's competition. He believes that the badge sets Soldiers apart from their peers and demonstrates the ability to operate under pressure.

"It's an eye-opener," he said. "You see a lot of people that fail, and you see a few people that make it, so it shows you that it really does come down to how hard you study and how well you pay attention to details."

With testing complete, twenty-four newly minted Red Arrow EIB holders can now set themselves apart as experts in their craft. 🎖️



Soldiers from the Wisconsin and Utah Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve donned the historic 'Old Abe' patch during a June 16 patching ceremony at the 101st Division headquarters building on Fort Campbell, Ky. The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) became the first division headquarters in the Army to fully integrate U.S. Army Reserve and Army National Guard Soldiers into their organization. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Terrance Rhodes, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Public Affairs

An Old Abe reunion

Staff Sgt. Terrance D. Rhodes
2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. — More than 60 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers from various units across the state donned the historic 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) patch during a June 16 ceremony held outside the division headquarters. More than 10 Soldiers from the Utah National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve also participated.

The Soldiers are now assigned to the 101st as it became the Army's first division headquarters to convert to a multi-component unit.

The purpose of multi-component unit division headquarters is to fully integrate Army Reserve and National Guard Soldiers into the modification table of organization and equipment (MTO&E), which is designed to close operational gaps in mission command capacity, while establishing cohesive, fully capable headquarters that can execute assigned missions.

The end state is that the 101st Airborne Division headquarters completes the conversion to the Department of the Army-directed multi-

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Wisconsin Guard part of multi-component unit

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component unit headquarters design and the division is trained and ready to deploy to support operational deployments. The 101st Airborne Division will also provide lessons learned and feedback setting favorable conditions for the multi-component unit headquarters conversion of the remaining Army divisions.

During the ceremony, Maj. Gen. Gary Volesky, commander, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Fort Campbell, began his speech by informing those in attendance about the proud history of the 101st.

"The Screaming Eagles are well-known in the state of Wisconsin," Volesky said. "The roots of this division run deep in the history of the Badger state.

"The eagle patch we proudly wear on our shoulder is directly descended from Old Abe, the mascot who was adopted by the 8th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment during the American Civil War," he continued. "Old Abe led that famed regiment into battle during our nation's bloodiest conflict in history."

The 8th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment spent its entire military service in what was then known as the Western Theater of the American Civil War comprising Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama. "Old Abe" was present during all of the 8th Wisconsin's battles and was carried into combat by a sergeant on a special perch alongside the 8th Wisconsin's national and regimental colors. The inspiration and importance of the eagle can be traced back to the words of Confederate Gen. Sterling Price, at the Battle of Corinth in 1862.

"That bird must be captured or killed at all hazards," Price said during the battle. "I would rather get that eagle than capture a whole brigade or a dozen battle flags."

Volesky encouraged those in attendance saying that the future of the 101st looks bright.

"Many have tried since then to kill the spirit of our eagle, and all have — and will continue — to fail," he said. "Our newest Soldiers will make our spirit stronger."

Lt. Col. Leland Ward, senior representative for the Wisconsin National Guard, understands the importance of the rejoining forces.

"Today we are presented with an historical opportunity to reunite the state of Wisconsin with the division," Ward said. "This is an opportunity for us to prove the flexibility of the [Division Multi-Component Unit], as we integrate seamlessly under the division commander."

No matter the mission, or the next rendezvous with destiny, the legacy will continue to grow.

"Today, history comes full circle as I welcome you back to the 101st team," Volesky said. "I know you will wear the Screaming Eagle patch with the same honor and dignity as the 8th Wisconsin had carrying Old Abe into battle." 🦅



Above, Soldiers from the Wisconsin and Utah Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve donned the historic 'Old Abe' patch during a June 16 patching ceremony. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Terrance Rhodes, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Public Affairs

Right, Old Abe with members of the 8th Wisconsin. Photo courtesy U.S. Army

Classroom HAZARDS

Capt. Joe Trovato
Wisconsin National Guard

When the Soldiers and Airmen of the Wisconsin National Guard's 54th Civil Support Team arrived in Milwaukee in mid-July, they faced an unknown hazardous materials threat in a vacant school building on the city's northwest side.

Representatives from the FBI, the Milwaukee Police Department's Hazardous Device Unit, or "bomb squad," and the Milwaukee Fire Department's Hazardous Materials Team were already on-hand, as were representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency and local public health officials. The bomb squad and the hazmat team had already entered the building with robots and quickly determined that a potential weapons of mass destruction threat existed inside the building, and the CST was called in to assist.

Thankfully, the scenario that took place July 16 was part of an exercise coordinated between the agencies, but the realistic threat they faced was one for which each agency must be prepared.

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Soldiers with the 54th CST inspect a mock lab during a July 16 exercise in Milwaukee. The CST partnered with the Milwaukee Fire Department, the Milwaukee Police Department, the FBI, the EPA and local public health department officials for an exercise that tested the unit's WMD skills.

Wisconsin National Guard photo by
Capt. Joe Trovato

Exercise tests 54th CST's weapons of mass destruction response skills

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With that in mind, the National Guard set up a scenario complete with notional radiation sources, a chemical lab, wires, electronic components, tools, wires and other hazards inside the former Phyllis Wheatley Elementary School on N. 20th St. in Milwaukee.

In the scenario, a school district maintenance employee making his rounds of the property heard movement on the school's upper floors and saw a man flee the building. When police arrived, they searched the building and found suspicious and potentially hazardous materials, prompting calls to the hazmat team and the police department's hazardous device unit, who ultimately requested additional support.

Enter the Madison, Wisconsin-based CST, which is available to incident commanders statewide 24 hours a day, seven days a week with no advance notice. The unit is the Wisconsin National Guard's full-time response team for emergencies or terrorist events that involve weapons of mass destruction, toxic industrial chemicals or natural disasters.

When the CST arrived at the scene, they began working with the first responders on the scene and soon sent a joint entry team into the building along with hazmat team members from the Milwaukee Fire Department. The training represented a realistic response scenario, which could prove invaluable in the event of a real-world response.

More important though, according to CST members, are the connections and relationships that the joint training scenarios provide between the CST and the civilian emergency response agencies with whom they would work in real emergency situations.

"This is a great opportunity, and really what I think is really one of the biggest



Soldiers with the 54th CST help a Milwaukee Fire Department hazardous materials team member and a fellow CST member adjust their equipment before entering

a building during a July 16 exercise in Milwaukee. [Move your cursor over this photo to see another image](#) Wisconsin National Guard photos by Capt. Joe Trovato

benefits of our training today or anytime is our ability to work interoperably with the hazmat teams throughout the state," said Lt. Col. Eric Leckel, the commander of the 54th CST.

Leckel said that while the joint training opportunities are critical to successful operations, even more important are the opportunities to work with the people and organizations with whom they would respond in real-world scenarios. One of the goals is to establish working relationships in advance of emergency situations.

And why?

"So once we respond to an actual incident, we're not exchanging business

cards when we get there."

"Our decon folks know their decon folks," he said of the relationship between Milwaukee's hazmat team and the National Guard unit. "Our survey folks know their entry folks, so we're able to flow right into an event."

The exercise in Milwaukee was part two of a three-day workout for the CST which saw it work with both of Wisconsin's two type 1 hazmat teams. The CST was in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, July 14 for an exercise with the Eau-Claire/Chippewa Falls hazmat team before travelling back to its home station in Madison and then immediately onto Milwaukee July 16.

"So we were able to deploy to Eau Claire on Monday, exercise all day with their team and then redeploy back to home station last night and reset and prepare for today's exercise," Leckel said.

The unit conducted a similar exercise in Eau Claire.

In Wisconsin, there are a total of 18 different hazmat teams – two of which are type 1 teams. Type 1 teams must be prepared to respond to potential WMD threats, and the CST had the opportunity to train with both of those teams in different parts of the state in the span of just three days.

The scenarios were about as realistic as possible, according to Leckel. 📷

Red Arrow meets Redcoat



Lieutenant Nick Mellis, of the British Army's Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry, fires a .50-caliber Browning machine gun June 7 at Fort McCoy, Wis., as part of the Military Reserve Exchange Program June 6-19. Submitted photo

Capt. Joe Trovato *Wisconsin National Guard*

Strong alliances are built on personal relationships, and the alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom perhaps grew a bit stronger after an exchange program partnered officers from both countries together for two weeks in Wisconsin.

Capt. Orrin Viner, with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Madison-based Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry, hosted Lieutenant Nick Mellis, a British officer with the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry as part of the Military Reserve Exchange Program, June 6-19.

The dates corresponded with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's annual

training at Fort McCoy. The exchange marked Mellis's first trip to the U.S., and it provided a glimpse into how the American military operates on a day-to-day basis.

The unit spent a lot of time on various weapons ranges, employing vehicle-mounted and individual weapons systems, Mellis said. Having the opportunity to see the U.S. command structure and training methods in action was a valuable

experience for him, as was getting familiarized with U.S. weapons and equipment like American body armor and helmets.

On the whole, he said, there are many more similarities between the British army and the U.S. Army, but differences remain.

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Red Arrow officer hosts British officer in military exchange

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"It's just been interesting pointing out the similarities and also the differences, especially the finer details, between the two armies," he said.

Mellis hails from a light cavalry unit in Scotland with a very similar mission set to the 105th, so the concepts were familiar.

"The way operations are planned, the way orders are laid out, the way even ranges are run, it's all very similar processes," he said. "The big difference is actually in the actual wording of everything, so speaking on the radios, how you go about explaining what is going to take place. The wording is different, and I think that is where the big education point is.

"Whenever the U.K. and the U.S. work together, everything will be carried out very much the same, but you may easily get confused by the way someone says it, or how they describe it," Mellis said. "It's very different."

That was the biggest lesson he said he'd take back to the U.K. with him.

As members of NATO, the U.S. and U.K. operate with similar expectations, he said, but the need for clear communication and even understanding the American rank structure and scopes of responsibility were vital lessons learned.

"A lieutenant, for example, in the British army would never be in charge of more than a platoon, but obviously in the U.S. Army, it can run up to company or troop level."

Viner echoed Mellis's comments, noting the difficulties in nomenclature and vocabulary, and expects to learn similar lessons when he travels to Scotland to link up with Mellis again this fall. When comparing field experiences, Viner said he learned that British cavalry units travel much lighter than what he is accustomed to in the American military.

"One of the biggest takeaways I think

I've learned from his descriptions of how they work is that we bring everything bigger, whether it's needed or not," Viner said. "I like being a light, quick scout, so it'll be interesting to see how their scouts maneuver and work with what they have."

The Military Reserve Exchange Program partners National Guard and Reserve officers with allied officers in similar branches and assignments for training associated with mobilization duties. The experience enhances the abilities of those officers to work in joint and allied environments and fosters strong relationships.

Viner and Capt. Matthew Myers, from the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry were selected to participate in this year's exchange from the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

Both Viner and Mellis agreed that the overall alliance can only grow stronger with future exchanges. Specifically with a decreased presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, where allied forces have operated together for the past 14 years and forged an understanding of each ally's tactics, the need to continue building on the relationships formed there is more critical now than ever, Mellis said.

"So I think it's important to continue doing exchanges, even if it's just one person at a time, so that we remember what we've learned and what we can do together so that in the future if it comes up again that the U.S. and the U.K. have to fight together again then we won't have forgotten the cooperation that we've had together these last 15 years," he said.

"The partnership will remain as strong as it was hopefully, so that in the future it can just carry on, and we can get back to doing it the way that it was in the last few years," he added.

Viner planned to travel to Scotland in September to train with Mellis and his cavalry unit there. 🇬🇧



Lieutenant Nick Mellis, of the British Army's Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry, and Capt. Orrin Viner, of Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry, in front of the state capitol in Madison, Wisconsin, June 17. Viner hosted Mellis during the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's annual training at Fort McCoy as part of the Military Reserve Exchange Program June 6-19. Submitted photo

Polish air force visits Volk Field

Senior Airman Andrea F. Rhode
115th Fighter Wing

VOLK FIELD, Wis. — Members of the Polish Air Force visited the 128th Air Control Squadron June 6-17 as a part of the [State Partnership Program](#).

The four service members spent their time observing large force exercises during the Northern Lightning exercise.

“They had a chance to interact and observe how our tactics, techniques and procedures are implemented,” said Capt. John McKenna, 128th Air Control Squadron assistant operations director. “By working together, we were able to collaborate our best practices and disciplines on tasks such as radio communication procedures, threat recognition and crew resource management.”

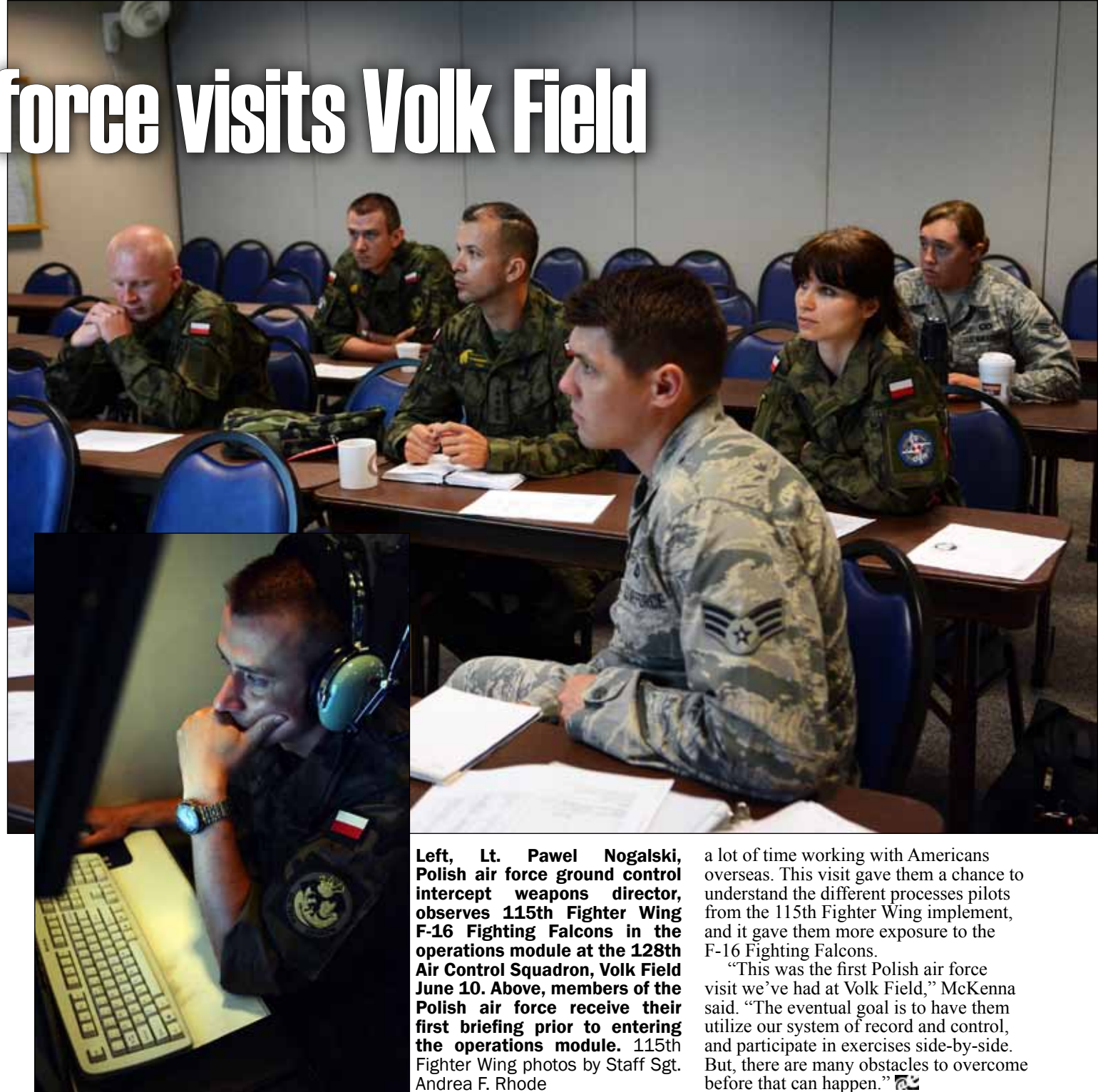
Their itinerary for the two-week span included a base tour, mass briefings, reviewing various programs and completing an air control tower tour, among other activities.

“We were here to gain experience and to compare how you guys work with how we work,” said Lt. Karol Trochim, Polish air force ground control intercept weapons director. “Also, to compare our systems — the kind of information you gather compared to what we gather.”

The Polish air force members spent time working in the operations module, a radar area dedicated to their particular jobs. They found several similarities between the 128th Air Control Squadron systems and theirs in Poland, but found the differences during their observations more helpful.

“It’s very helpful because we work a lot with your pilots and pilots from other countries,” Trochim said. “Based on what we learned here, we can be a better partner to your pilots when they visit our country.”

According to Trochim, they spend



Left, Lt. Pawel Nogalski, Polish air force ground control intercept weapons director, observes 115th Fighter Wing F-16 Fighting Falcons in the operations module at the 128th Air Control Squadron, Volk Field June 10. Above, members of the Polish air force receive their first briefing prior to entering the operations module. 115th Fighter Wing photos by Staff Sgt. Andrea F. Rhode

a lot of time working with Americans overseas. This visit gave them a chance to understand the different processes pilots from the 115th Fighter Wing implement, and it gave them more exposure to the F-16 Fighting Falcons.

“This was the first Polish air force visit we’ve had at Volk Field,” McKenna said. “The eventual goal is to have them utilize our system of record and control, and participate in exercises side-by-side. But, there are many obstacles to overcome before that can happen.”

MISSION READY

Senior Airman Andrea F. Rhode
115th Fighter Wing

The 115th Fighter Wing conducted an Alert Force Operational Assessment (AFOA) at its Madison, Wisconsin base June 8-11.

The AFOA team of specialized personnel from 1st Air Force, Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, visited the Aerospace Control Alert (ACA) site to assess its mission-readiness. These assessments usually come before a no-notice, official North American Aerospace Defense Command Inspector General Inspection, and occur every 20-24 months.

"The AFOA team looks at our training programs, alert procedures, overall operation and provides feedback," said Lt. Col. Matthew Peltier, ACA commander. "They provide us with recommended improvement areas, weaknesses and strengths."

The team spent the week watching over and providing feedback for numerous activities. The 115th Fighter Wing demonstrated its ability to accomplish the mission through a practice scramble, and also used a Fertile Keynote exercise.

"A Fertile Keynote utilizes Cessna 182s from the Civil Air Patrol," Peltier said. "The CAP will fly as a target of interest (TOI) and act in specific ways to simulate a scenario that we may be called upon to investigate."

A common mission for the pilots is to "inspect."

"We scramble our alert aircraft, intercept the TOI, and report back to



An F-16 Fighting Falcon from the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing in Madison, Wis., intercepts a simulated non-responsive civilian aircraft during a Fertile Keynote Exercise from 2011. The exercise tests the readiness of personnel assigned to the Air Control Alert mission to rapidly respond to potential aircraft threats approaching or operating within U.S. or Canadian airspace. Civil Air Patrol photo by Capt. David Berget

Eastern Air Defense Sector," Peltier said. "We become EADS's eyes and ears. Often we attempt to communicate with the TOI, and provide assistance if required."

Typically the AFOA team needs two days to assess the alert facilities, operations and maintenance practices. According to Senior Master Sgt.


Scott Edmonston, ACA chief enlisted manager, the assessors were impressed with the maintenance practices and overall condition of the jets.

"I heard the AFOA team members make comments like, 'the aircraft were impeccable, probably the best we've seen to date,' and 'the alert aircraft were immaculately maintained and pride of ownership was evident,'" Edmonston said. "Comments like this make me even more proud of my Airmen. I'm fortunate to supervise people who take pride in their aircraft to ensure the Aerospace Control Alert, no fail mission, can be accomplished."

Since this assessment was not graded, the Airmen had a chance to discuss concerns or issues while learning from the AFOA team's observations.

"The outside look is a great way to identify issues that, for one reason or another, we just aren't able to identify on our own," Peltier said. "The AFOA team can bring awareness to these unknown issues, engage in conversation, collaborate to fix, and address concerns in a non-threatening manner."

In addition to these AFOA assessments, the Wing is also evaluated internally throughout the year.

"We do utilize the 115th Fighter Wing IG and quality assurance teams to evaluate and inspect our mission readiness with the same in-depth look as both the AFOA and NORAD IG would," Peltier said. "There really isn't a need to have 'extra' preparation prior to these assessments — we are always ready." 



At left, Sun Prairie High School English Teacher Kristi Ruggles dons an EOD suit at the 115th Fighter Wing in Madison, Wis., during a tour of National Guard and Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs facilities June 18. Above, Kristin Wilkinson, Rick Hudson, Kristi Ruggles, Steve Braatz, Jill Hansen, Anthony Bilgrien, Nancy Everson and Steve Rubin in front of a display F-16 at the 115th Fighter Wing. The educators visited as part of a Dane County School Consortium graduate class aimed at introducing educators to jobs and career paths open to their students. Wisconsin National Guard photos by Kelly Bradley

Learning about the Department of Military Affairs

Kelly Bradley
@ease emeritus staff

Educators took on the role of students last month, when a group of teachers from Sun Prairie toured Wisconsin National Guard facilities and the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs. From June 17-18, eight educators – counselors, high school and middle school teachers – visited Wisconsin's Joint Force Headquarters for two days of speakers and tours.

The Dane County School Consortium hosts a week-long summer graduate class, where educators get credits to tour businesses and organizations. The goal was to learn about jobs, career paths and what options are out there for their students.


A goal of the two-day class was to showcase how the Department of Military Affairs, Wisconsin Emergency Management, Army and Air Guard all work together – and to expose the educators to all the different jobs and

career paths the department houses under one roof.

The educators sat in on discussion panels with state and federal employees, Army and Air Guard Recruiters, the Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy, the Guard's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator office, and women in the military.

"I really enjoyed the panel discussions – the wide diversity of Guard jobs and backgrounds, and hearing what their pathway was into the military," said one educator.

The group toured the facilities of the Madison-based 54th Civil Support Team, the Wisconsin Emergency Operations Center, 115th Fighter Wing and a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter flight facility over the course of the two days.

"Despite all the budget cuts, I'm so glad these 10,000 Soldiers and Airmen are here for us," said Rick Hudson, a counselor at Cardinal Heights Upper Middle School. 

Adjutant General presents homeland security strategy

MADISON, Wis. — The state's revised homeland security strategy should be seen as a roadmap that guides state and local response to such potential hazards as cyber attacks, asymmetric or terrorist threats, and catastrophic incidents as well as sustaining response capabilities already developed.

That's according to Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general and Gov. Scott Walker's homeland security advisor. In the latter role, Dunbar chairs Wisconsin's Homeland Security Council, comprised of representatives from 16 state agencies and first responder organizations.

"This strategy is Wisconsin's homeland security keystone document," Dunbar said during an official presentation ceremony July 10 in the governor's conference room at the state capitol. "It's a core document, the foundation on which the rest of our plans and programs will be built upon."

Dunbar said state government has a clear responsibility to protect the state network and respond to cyber incidents. The revised strategy focuses on improving Wisconsin's cyber response capabilities, developing a cyber disruption strategy and creating a cyber liaison office program.

"We think there's quite a bit of ingenuity in our plan," Dunbar said. "On the cyber front, the cyber disruption plan, we're going to collaborate with all the critical infrastructure lead companies that will partner with us and try to figure out if something happens to a particular critical infrastructure area, what might be needed in terms of supporting them, and to build the right capabilities here in the state to end the disruption as soon as possible."

Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, who accepted the strategy on behalf of Walker, noted that there were 60 million cyber attacks on private and public agencies in Wisconsin last month.

"It's an incredibly serious threat, and we need to address it," she said.

Dunbar described cyber attacks as asymmetric threats that are more challenging to respond to — in large part



Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar presented a Homeland Security Strategy to Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch during a brief ceremony July 10 in the governor's conference room at the state capitol. @ease photo by Vaughn R. Larson

to how new the threat is.

"With a tornado or a flood, we have well-developed muscle movements on how to respond," Dunbar said. "Not to minimize the severity that a tornado can cause, but we know what to do when a tornado happens. We haven't gone through a big cyber event, and every indication is something is going to happen down that lane."

Mark Michie, the Joint Staff vice chief of staff, said the Wisconsin National Guard is building a Cyber Network Defense team, which will begin training next year.

The revised homeland security strategy's second priority focuses on preventing and responding to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-explosive (CBRNE) events, infectious disease incidents and "agro-terror" events that could devastate the state and its economy.

The strategy's third priority focuses on natural or man-made catastrophic incident response and recovery.

"In a catastrophic event, local and state resources can be overwhelmed, and there may be a significant threat to life and property," Dunbar explained. "It's important to plan for high consequence, low probability events in order to protect our community and enable a deliberate and full recovery following a disaster. This plan seeks to script our response during the critical first 72 hours after an event, to expand on regional collaboration and improve resilience through the long-term recovery plan."

In previous years, Wisconsin has invested federal Homeland Security grants to develop response and mitigation capabilities. The final priority of the state's revised homeland security strategy is to sustain those capabilities.


"We know these are very austere fiscal times," Kleefisch said, "and we know you had to spend a good amount of time deciding where exactly [federal funds] would be allocated. We know those funds have been appropriated exactly where they are most needed — the local level, and at the tribal level, working with your first responders, the police department, sheriff's offices and municipalities and counties across the state."

The Wisconsin National Guard Joint Staff has developed a five-year revolving plan to prepare for the hazards identified by Wisconsin Emergency Management's Threat Hazard Identification Risk Assessment (THIRA) — floods, tornadoes, snowstorms, wildfires, cyber attacks, terrorism, CBRNE, pandemics and agro-terror events. Operation Plans have been developed for each contingency, which allows the Joint Staff to identify the appropriate assets quickly and place the right Wisconsin National Guard members on state orders.

"We call it 'speed through preparedness,'" said Col. Julie Gerety, the Joint Staff operations, plans and training officer.

The state homeland security strategy is updated every four years, following each gubernatorial election, and is informed by public comment.

"Part of the point of revising the plan and revisiting how we sustain our current collaborative relationships that resource this is there are new threats that emerge every single day," Kleefisch said. "The threats today are certainly not the threats from our childhoods, so we need to make sure we're prepared for what comes in the future. Part of our plan is anticipating the future, being prepared for whatever may come."

"We think this is a well thought-out plan," Dunbar added. "It's not going to solve all our problems or build walls that make us impenetrable, but it will give us good places to start and be better prepared when the inevitable will happen." 

Innovative project takes unit training to a new league

Master Sgt. Paul Gorman
115th Fighter Wing

Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 724th Engineer Battalion joined business owners, civic leaders, and community members from the Mosinee, Wisconsin area June 14 to celebrate the start of a construction project more than five years in the making.

As part of the Department of Defense's [Innovative Readiness Training](#) program, the Wisconsin Soldiers will help construct the Mosinee Community Athletic Complex. Scheduled for completion in 2020, the multi-phase construction project will include eight new baseball/softball fields, two football/soccer fields, two tennis courts, a basketball court and concession stands.

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, Wisconsin's deputy adjutant general for Army, attended the ceremony to offer his appreciation to the Mosinee community for the opportunity to demonstrate the considerable skills and capabilities the Army National Guard is capable of bringing to bear within the state.

Capt. Benjamin Krall, 229th Horizontal Engineer Company commander, took a moment to recognize the value inherent in community engagement.

"If we didn't have events like this, we'd wind up getting our training at sites like Fort McCoy, where we'd just push the same dirt over and over," Krall said. "Here our Soldiers receive excellent training, but also get the chance to interact with both outside agencies and their own communities."

According to Krall, the greatest benefit may lie in the end result. IRT projects create an end product that military

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Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 724th Engineer Battalion engage in the initial stage of a multi-phase Innovative Readiness Training project in Mosinee, Wis., June 14. The project will result in the creation of a 50-plus acre athletic complex by 2020, which will serve the Mosinee community as well as supporting regional and state sporting events. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Paul Gorman

Innovative training benefits Soldiers, community

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members can take ownership of and pride in, years after the work is done.

“Simply put,” Krall said, “it’s good for morale.”

The roughly \$5 million complex was little more than a concept in 2008. According to Wisconsin Air National Guard Master Sgt. Jessica Maple, converting 50-plus acres of field and forest into a local sporting complex seemed a nearly impossible feat.

A member of both the Mosinee school board, Maple discussed the project with her husband, a drill status Soldier himself, before opting to reach out to the Army National Guard for assistance.

Maple’s decision paid off when Capt. Kyle Gruber, 829th Engineer Company commander, recognized the possibility of submitting the request as an Innovative Readiness Training opportunity — a project which enhances unit training and readiness while fulfilling a community need.

Despite delays resulting from multiple military deployments, the combined efforts of the Mosinee School District, Mosinee Community Athletic Association and Midwest Engineering firm REI resulted in the formal submission and ultimate approval of the athletic complex as an IRT project for the Wisconsin National Guard.

Mosinee School Board President Cory Tomczyk, headed up the community athletic association when the project first began. “There was a lot of doubt as to whether the MCAA could make this happen,” he recalled, “and we couldn’t have without the National Guard. There’s simply no way.”

Amid the sound of heavy construction equipment, Tomczyk relayed the tremendous benefits the complex will provide.

“I can’t begin to tell you all the things it’s going to do for the sports community,”



Members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 229th Horizontal Engineer Company clear debris from the construction site of an Innovative Readiness Training project in Mosinee, Wis., June 14. The project will result in the

creation of a 50-plus acre athletic complex by 2020, which will service the Mosinee community, as well as supporting regional and state sporting events. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Paul Gorman

Tomczyk said, “or the community as a whole.”

Upon its scheduled completion in 2020, construction of the Mosinee Community Athletic Complex will have provided Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers with more than 38,000 man-hours of critical career training over a five-year period, becoming one of the largest examples of Innovative Readiness Training in state history.

Components of the 724th Engineer Battalion contributing to the project include the 949th Engineer Detachment from Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin for survey and design support; 229th (Horizontal) Engineer Company from Prairie du Chien and Platteville for earth leveling, parking improvements, roadway construction and general landscaping; 829th (Vertical) Engineer Company out of Chippewa Falls, Richland Center

and Ashland to support the blocking, plumbing, electrical and general carpentry of field lights, bleachers, concession facilities and announcement stands; and the 924th Engineer Detachment from Chippewa Falls for project oversight and work schedule management. Additionally, the 1158th Transportation Company from Black River Falls will transport heavy equipment to and from the construction site. 📷



Remembering our fallen

Vaughn R. Larson
@ease staff

FORT MCCOY, Wis.
— With broken ribs, a punctured lung and the loss of his spleen, Spc. Charles Kaufman could have opted out of his unit's deployment to Iraq in 2005.

But the Fairchild, Wisconsin resident who joined the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry with his cousin Kelly was not

going to stay home. A month after falling out of a tree stand, he joined his unit in Iraq.

"That leads me to the way that I view Charles — he embodied the warrior ethos," said Maj. Andrew Johansen, who was Kaufman's platoon leader back in 2005, during a command remembrance ceremony June 18 at Constitution Park, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. "That's how I remember him. He placed the mission first. He never accepted defeat. The thing



Spc. Charles Kaufman

about Charles is he could have stayed home, but he chose to come to Iraq, he chose to meet up with his brothers in Charlie Company, including his cousin Kelly. And Charles never quit."

Kaufman was killed by a roadside bomb June 26, 2005 in Baghdad. He was the third Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldier to be killed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the second Soldier from Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry. One decade later, a new generation of Soldiers stood in formation on a sunny, breezy day to pay respects to a fallen comrade.

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Maj. Andrew Johansen of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, shares a story about Spc. Charles Kaufman during a June 18 remembrance ceremony at Fort McCoy, Wis. @ease photos by Vaughn R. Larson

John Dehnke, a former Wisconsin Army National Guard recruiter, shares a story about Spc. Charles Kaufman during a June 18 remembrance ceremony at Constitution Park in Fort McCoy, Wis. Kaufman, a member of Detachment 1, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry was killed June 26, 2005 by a roadside bomb in Baghdad, Iraq. @ease photos by Vaughn R. Larson



Wisconsin Guard continues to remember its fallen

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“It is vital that we, as a nation, pause to solemnly remember and pay tribute to our brave fallen who secured the prosperity and liberty we enjoy today,” said Brig. Gen. Ken Koon, assistant adjutant general for training and readiness. “Wisconsin’s noble legacy of service and sacrifice began with the Civil War, in places like Gettysburg and Antietam ... and more recently on the streets of Baghdad and in Samarra, Iraq, and in the mountains of Afghanistan.”

“We enjoy our freedom today because of people like Spc. Kaufman,” Koon continued, “who selflessly volunteered twice to serve our state and nation — first

when he enlisted with his cousin, and then again when he was injured from a fall. He could have stayed home safely, but instead he chose to catch up to his unit and serve with his best friends.

“We must never forget their legacy, and we owe it to our war dead to live lives every day that are worthy of their sacrifices.”

John Dehnke, a former Wisconsin Army National Guard recruiter, recalled meeting with Kaufman’s parents Celeste and Mark when their son wanted to join the Guard. He called Kaufman an inspiration, and wears a wristband with Kaufman’s name on it to this day.

“Hopefully when you look at that wall in Charlie Company and you see his picture up there, and you see the

memorial, you think about that sacrifice that he and several others made for this great nation,” Dehnke said. “Just remember the pride and honor he served with — let it resonate amongst you and in your hearts. And never forget, because it would be a damn shame if we did.

“He’s a hero,” Dehnke continued. “Don’t forget him.”

Brig. Gen. Ken Koon, right, assistant adjutant general for readiness and training, speaks about Spc. Charles Kaufman during a June 18 remembrance ceremony at Constitution Park on Fort McCoy, Wis.





RETURN TO FORM

Staff Sgt. Oscar Gollaz
Wisconsin National Guard

Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers improved their physical fitness and cultivated techniques for refining their quality of life at the two-week Wisconsin Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Camp, offered through the 426th Regional Training Institute at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

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Students compete in team physical fitness training events at the 2015 Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Camp. The fitness camp trained soldiers on physical fitness and a variety of life skills in order to improve individual readiness at Fort McCoy, Wis., from July 19-Aug. 2. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Bethany Anderson

Soldiers challenged to reclaim physical fitness

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According to Sgt. 1st Class Hayden Eckleberg, the camp operations non-commissioned officer, the goal of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Camp is to retain Soldiers struggling to pass their Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) or body mass ratio by providing them the resources necessary for improving their physical fitness and quality of life. This iteration of the course trained 69 Soldiers in early August.

The camp offers a diverse set of instructional classes.

"We provide them many tools to improve their situation," Staff Sgt. Brooks Wangler, the camp's course manager said. "Tools like resilience training to control how they think and approach certain situations, financial classes in case they are struggling financially, and teach them how to conduct proper exercise.

"We teach them that they don't need work-out equipment to improve," he added.

All Army training is conducted with the idea of "train as you fight" — therefore, passing the APFT is about more than simply meeting a fitness standard. A Soldier's physical conditioning must consistently meet the demands of their occupational specialty and potential combat situations.

The APFT is a critical component of Soldier readiness.

The APFT is designed to test the muscular strength, endurance, and cardiovascular respiratory fitness of soldiers in the Army. Soldiers are scored based on their performance in three events — the push-up, sit-up, and a timed two-mile run. The scores range from 0 to 100 points in each event. A minimum score of 60 in each event is required to pass the test. The Soldier's overall score is the sum of the points from the three events. If a



Students identify emotions during resilience training as part of the 2015 Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Camp. Resilience training provides students with mental toughness skills. The fitness camp trained soldiers on physical fitness and a variety of life skills in order to improve individual readiness at Fort McCoy, Wis., from July 19-Aug. 2. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Bethany Anderson

Soldier passes all three events, the total may range from 180 to 300.

Failure to pass two or more consecutive record APFTs can lead to separation from the Army.

It is an obligation for Soldiers to pass the physical fitness test and meet body mass ratio standards. Those who do not meet the standards eventually face an ultimatum — pass the test or get discharged. The camp offers a holistic opportunity for Soldiers to reclaim their physical readiness to avoid being separated from the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

"The end state of the Comprehensive Fitness Camp is to place Soldiers on the right track to passing height and weight, or the APFT," Wangler said.

The difficult task for some is finding a way to balance their military duties with their civilian lives.

"The last couple of years have been very stressful in my life," camp student Pvt. 1st Class Caitlin Giller said. "I want to make myself better, and I want to make a better life for myself."

The cadre members identify time management as a crucial component to balancing the two life styles.

Fitness camp student Staff Sgt. Richard Baechle said, "Many people who are out of shape say that they don't have time. We're learning that in 15 to 20 minutes you can get a good exercise."

Staff Sgt. Brooks Wangler, camp course manager, said the cadre members are there to support the students, not to work against them.

"Some people think we are here to tear them down and treat them like garbage," he said. "We are actually here as cadre to motivate them to strive forward."

The students agreed.

"At first I was nervous," Giller said. "I was thinking it was going to be like basic training, but instead everyone here is super positive and encouraging. They helped me understand that I may be struggling, but that there is a solution to this problem."

According to Wangler, the Soldiers are testing at the beginning and at the end of the camp. Four out of the 69 Soldiers passed the PT test their on first try, and the overall average score was 141 points. Seventeen passed the last test with an overall average score of 169 points.

Twenty of the 69 Soldiers met the Army standards for height, weight, and body mass ratio after the first PT test. That number increased to 24 after the second test.

The program will track the Soldiers physical fitness testing conducted at their home units for the next six months. 📷

'We are the village'

Families urged to help Challenge Academy graduates continue improving



Vaughn R. Larson
@ease staff

One hundred and three at-risk teens from counties across Wisconsin graduated from a challenging 22-week program June 11 with the tools to make better life decisions and persevere through problems.

The Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy takes teens out of an environment where bad choices were easy to make, and houses them for more than five months at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. The quasi-military setting builds positive values through physical and mental discipline, and transforms at-risk teens into cadets.

Roland Pechie, a senior team leader at Challenge Academy and keynote speaker for the June 11 graduation ceremony at Mauston High School in Mauston, Wisconsin, used a rock quarry metaphor to explain the tough environment the teens came from and the condition

in which they arrived — a mass of imperfect rock.

"We have a purpose for this imperfect rock," Pechie said. "It is to provide them with the skill sets to become an immediate productive member of society, a successful, responsible citizen. Not perfect, but a positive change."

Pechie referred to jackhammers, claw hammers, ball-peen hammers and chisels in a series of refining metaphorical tools to remove the rough edges from imperfect rocks until only small imperfections remained. Citing the proverb about requiring a village to raise a child, he described three parts of the Challenge Academy village — the staff, the cadets and the families.

"For today's purpose, ladies and gentlemen, we are the village," Pechie said. "Everyone present today at this graduation ceremony, we are the village. We'd best invest in those before us today, for they are the future leaders of

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One hundred and three Wisconsin National Guard's Challenge Academy cadets from 40 counties exult upon hearing the command "Dismissed!" during a formal graduation ceremony June 11 at Mauston High School in Mauston, Wis. @ease photo by Vaughn R. Larson



Above, Cadet Lubna Assad, Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy distinguished honor graduate, addresses 102 fellow cadets from 40 counties during a formal graduation ceremony June 11 at Mauston High School in Mauston, Wis. The 22-week quasi-military residential program at Fort McCoy, Wis., instills life skills and values in at-risk teens. @ease photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Challenge Academy cadre urge families to support cadets as they enter non-residential phase of program

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our towns and our communities.

"They need positive reinforcement, as we all do," he continued. "Be kind with them. Let go of any and all previous disappointments. Lift them up. Give them hope. They can overcome."

Michael Murphy, director of the Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy, echoed that sentiment by asking a favor of the families and friends in attendance.

"Do not be a negative influence, that naysayer, that destroyer of dreams," Murphy said. "Be the opposite — be kind, be uplifting, be supportive."

Suzy Jasek of Hayward, Wisconsin, understands that. She has helped mentor Damien Heath since January, and will continue to do so as he begins the 12-month post-residential phase of the academy.

"Sometimes you just need people to believe in you and try to keep the inner strength going for each other," Jasek said. "I think Damien's learned the same thing as well, that there are people willing to back him up and stay strong for him."

She described how Heath went from a student struggling with school and commitments to someone who will return to high school for his senior year, and play for the school football team.

"I think he's grown a ton from it," she said. "We're excited to cheer him on."

Jamal Perry of Milwaukee also saw considerable growth in Jameel Abuwi, the Challenge Academy teen he mentored.

"Before he started Challenge Academy he was very unsure of himself as far as what he's going to be doing after high school and beyond, really — he didn't know what he was going to do with his life," Perry said. "Now he definitely has a

better direction as far as what he wants to do in the immediate future. He's got that five, 10-year plan versus having no idea whatsoever.

"Also, he has more self-confidence as well — more outspoken, more sure, more confident," Perry continued, "and I think that will help him throughout his life. He's grown quite a bit. It's definitely been a positive experience for him."

Abuwi was recognized as an honor cadet at the beginning of the ceremony.

Lubna Assad, the Class 34 distinguished honor graduate, spoke about no longer investing time and energy regretting what might have been, and instead investing in positive change. She agreed that it takes a village to raise a child, but a village is made of individuals with choices.

"Ultimately, if you want to be successful in your life, it is up to you,"

she said. "This takes discipline. It took discipline to step away from family and friends and take on one of the hardest jobs we've ever handled at the Challenge Academy.

"From now on, we will be able to take all we have learned wherever we go," Assad continued. "We have learned to be adaptable, to take different routes. Wherever we go, whatever we do, we won't forget today."

Pechie said the graduating cadets had learned to overcome fear, addictions, prejudices, personal circumstances — and themselves.

"Here and now, they are ready to return home," Pechie said. "They will never be the same. Families, the heavy lifting now belongs to you. Love them to death — the true challenge begins now. We return them to you safe and secure. They have been trained." 📸

Air National Guard Mobile Experience shines at Summerfest

Airman 1st Class Morgan R. Lipinski
128th Refueling Wing

MILWAUKEE — The Wisconsin Air National Guard helped a national recruiting promotion reach new heights during the annual Summerfest music festival.

Members of the Milwaukee-based 128th Air Refueling Wing, the Madison, Wisconsin-based 115th Fighter Wing and Joint Force Headquarters, and Volk Field Air National Guard Base joined associates from the Marketing Werks Company marketing team to staff the Air National Guard Mobile Experience display June 25-28 at Henry Maier Festival Park. Their help was doubtless needed, as 1,376 registered visitors attended the display — shattering the previous record of 1,093 registered visitors.

“Summerfest is the world’s largest music festival, making it a huge attraction that draws in a very high attendance rate,” said Nikki Verheye, Air National Guard Mobile Experience team lead. “Having the asset at this event allows the recruiters to open up a conversation with the crowd, which may lead to a potential recruit.”

According to Master Sgt. Nicole Synowicz, 128th Air Refueling Wing recruiting and retention supervisor, the Air National Guard Mobile Experience display simulates several aspects of Air Force basic military training and military life. The display includes information tables, fitness testing equipment and an interactive virtual-gaming system.

The interactive nature of the display attracted many Summerfest attendees, allowing Wisconsin Air National Guard members to share information about the Air National Guard and its mission. The display travels to events around the United States, but Summerfest was one of its most successful to date.

“It’s a shared accomplishment between all the people who worked at the display,” Synowicz said. “We all worked hard, and our hard work paid off.”



Recruiters with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard talk with young festivalgoers about the mission and benefits of the local Air National Guard June 25. The recruiting and retention section with the 128th Air Refueling Wing were at the Air National Guard Mobile Experience display at the Henry Maier Festival Park in Milwaukee during Summerfest Music Festival to answer questions and inform the public. 128th Air Refueling Wing photos by Airman 1st Class Morgan R. Lipinski

Higher fuel efficiency



Airman 1st Class Morgan R. Lipinski
128th Refueling Wing

Staff Sgt. Tyson Krug flips several switches on the control panel, sets his chin on the chinrest and waits. At a steady altitude of 25,000 feet, a Canadian forest can be seen rushing past in a blur below. Although a mesmerizing sight, Krug continues to focus his attention solely on the horizon. After several moments, a KC-10 Extender glides into view and Krug begins to perform his duties as a KC-135R Stratotanker boom operator. Although this aerial refueling is similar to his previous

missions, Krug was one of the first boom operators to refuel on this newly published track titled the AR-128 East and West Refueling Route.

The AR-128, a refueling route founded by the Airmen of the 128th Air Refueling Wing mission planning cell, allows the 128th Air Refueling Wing to refuel West Coast-based deploying U.S. military aircraft in Canadian airspace. The new route was published in the "Canadian Forces Flight Supplement" handbook June 25.

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Staff Sgt. Tyson Krug, a boom operator with the 128th Air Refueling Wing, during a July 7 aerial refueling mission on the AR-128 East and West Refueling Route in support of U.S. military deploying aircraft. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Airman 1st Class Morgan R. Lipinski

New route saves time, money

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Previously, deploying aircraft from the West Coast were required to land on the East Coast for fuel before continuing the flight overseas. This resulted in an expensive delay due to aircraft runway and landing fees, as well as providing necessary accommodations for the deploying troops during the layover. The new aerial refueling route cuts costs and travel time down exponentially.

"Although the aerial refuel between the two aircrafts on AR-128 takes less than 30 minutes to complete, it saves up to \$50,000 per flight in tax dollars and shaves off numerous hours from the travel time," said Lt. Col. Steve Hunter, commander of the 126th Air Refueling Squadron with the 128th Air Refueling Wing.

Aerial refueling missions on the AR-128 are tactically timed to meet deploying aircraft approximately halfway through travel so the aircraft can make a direct flight overseas.


"The 128th is strategically located almost directly in the center of the country and, as a result of that, we can meet deploying aircraft from the Coast with only traveling slightly out of our own state," Hunter said.

Beyond the benefit of cutting costs and travel time, the AR-128 also benefits the deploying troops.

"The troops that are on those deploying flights are going to be away from their families for 120 days or more," Krug said. "Because there is less time needed for travel, that gives the troops more time at home with their loved ones before they deploy. That means everything to them."

While performing the AR-128 aerial refueling missions, 128th Air Refueling Wing Airmen also receive refresher training on flight coordination, fuel management and aerial refueling procedures, Krug said.

Since 2012, the route was a temporary mission that was being evaluated for its effectiveness, Hunter said. Because the route is primarily in Canadian airspace, its publication in the Canadian Forces Flight Supplement handbook was an essential step in furthering the route's progress. The AR-128 is set to be published in the United States Forces Flight Supplement handbook this fall. The 128th plans to involve other nearby air refueling units in the AR-128 and eventually supply fuel to deploying aircraft from around the country.

"The AR-128 was formed by the raw brainpower of the 128th Airmen," Hunter said. "We are working hard to optimize our location, skills, and knowledge to further the progress of both the United States military and its citizens." 

Make a difference, become an ESGR volunteer

Almost half of our military forces reside in the Guard and Reserve. The men and women who serve in the Guard and Reserve are unique in that they have a civilian job in conjunction to having a civilian employer. Support of America's employers and the employees that they share with the Guard and Reserve is paramount to the success of the all-volunteer force. Maintaining the relationship between Guard and Reserve members and their employers is vital to national security and supports the ability for these men and women to react quickly and perform critical disaster roles with the state.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense (DOD) agency, seeks to develop and promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the service of their employees with ESGR as the principle advocate within the DOD. ESGR accomplishes its mission by advocating relevant initiatives, recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of applicable laws, and resolving conflicts between employers and employees. ESGR operates via a network of volunteers that work with support staff in the state.

Volunteers that support ESGR come from all walks of life. These volunteers are business executives, civic leaders, and patriotic citizen. These volunteers share the desire to promote employing and supporting the members of the Guard and Reserve working in our communities.


Volunteers are needed in the following areas:

Employer Outreach: Develop relationships with employers to promote employment and advocacy of Guard and Reserve members.

Ombudsman: Assist with preventing, reducing, or resolving employer or service member misunderstandings regarding employment rights and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights (USERRA).

Public Affairs: Work with military and civilian media organizations to promote public understanding of the ESGR mission.

Military Outreach: Inform and educate members of the Guard and Reserve regarding their employment rights and responsibilities under USERRA.

Training is provided to all our volunteers. If you would like more information about ESGR, USERRA, or becoming a volunteer, call 1-800-292-9464, option 3. 

Troop movements

Joint Force Headquarters

Lt. Col. Timothy Covington has been selected as the next domestic operations director, operations/plans/training, for the Wisconsin National Guard Joint Staff. He follows **Col. Julie Gerety**, who will retire from the Wisconsin Army National Guard after 33 years of honorable service.

Lt. Col. JR Treharne has been selected as the next operations officer for the Wisconsin Army National Guard. He follows **Col. Peter Anderson**, who will retire in December.

Maj. Michael Hanson has been selected as the next strategic planner for the Wisconsin Army National Guard. He will retain his military assignment as 105th Cavalry Squadron commander.

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32nd Brigade

Lt. Col. David Sands has been selected as the next administrative officer/executive officer for the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. He follows **Lt. Col. Ryan Brown**, who assumed Wisconsin National Guard comptroller duties July 1.

Maj. Dan Walsh has been selected as the next commander of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment. He follows **Lt. Col. David Sands**.

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64th Troop Command

Lt. Col. Dennis Konkel has been selected as the next commander of the 64th Troop Command. He follows **Col. Julie Gerety**, who will return to the Joint Staff, where she is the full-time domestic operations director. A formal change of command ceremony will be held Nov. 2 at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Madison, Wisconsin.

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426th RTI

Lt. Col. Kathleen Adamson has been selected as the next commander of the 2nd Battalion, 426th Regiment (Regional Training Institute). She follows **Lt. Col. Mike Murphy**, who is taking a Title 10 tour to work in Army Personnel and Administration at the Pentagon.

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Recruiting and Retention Battalion


Lt. Col. Rio Ripberger has been selected as the next commander of the Recruiting and Retention Battalion. He follows **Lt. Col. Rochell Maier**, who has been assigned to the Joint Staff as the provost marshal.

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128th Air Refueling Wing

Lt. Col. Michael Guch took command of the 128th Operations Group during an Aug. 9 change of command ceremony in Milwaukee. He follows **Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Cashman**, who served as unit commander since January 2014.

Parting shot



Representations of the three touchstones of 9/11 — limestone from the Pentagon, steel from the World Trade Center, and black granite from Shanksville, Pa. — crown a monument to the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001 at the Wisconsin National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Madison, Wis.. @ease photo by Vaughn R. Larson